



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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CONTACT: VINCENT TROIA
615.313.5461 (OFFICE)
vince.troia@tn.gov

DHS INSPECTIONS HEAT UP AS TEMPERATURES RISE

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS THAT OFFER TRANSPORTATION PUT ON ALERT DURING SUMMER MONTHS

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— In a renewed effort to ensure that comprehensive transportation rules are being followed, as well as remaining extra vigilant to keep children safe during hot summer days, child care providers across Tennessee who transport children will face increased inspections again this summer. DHS licensing staff is cracking down with extra monitoring visits to providers who transport children. Those caught breaking the rules face a range of penalties, from being put on notice, probation or suspension of their operation.

Last summer more than 475 visits were conducted and 70 agencies were “Put on Notice” for violations that ranged from failure to conduct a walk-through to not reconciling the transportation logs. While violations have become less severe in the years since the transportation crackdowns began in 2003, DHS is not letting up.

“Even though most child care agencies follow the rules and are doing a wonderful job keeping children safe, these visits have uncovered problems, some serious,” said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. “While our providers are trained on transportation rules every six months, we will aggressively push increased inspections to make sure those rules are being followed.”

Four children died in hot child care vans in Memphis between 1997 and 2003. The tragedies prompted substantial changes in Tennessee’s child care licensing laws and transportation rules. DHS licenses 3,200 child care agencies across the state, and more than 600 offer transportation. It is a high risk part of a child care operation, and DHS monitors will be watching this summer with surprise visits at field trips and even surveillance.

After only a few moments left unattended inside a closed vehicle, children can suffer severe effects. Temperatures inside a closed vehicle climb quickly, even on moderately hot days. Studies show that on an 80-degree day, the temperature in a closed vehicle rises to 99 degrees in 10 minutes; 114 in 30 minutes; 123 in an hour. Children exposed to such extreme heat can suffer heatstroke, brain damage or death. More than half of all reported exposure deaths involved children under the age of two, according to Golden Gate Weather Service, and 90 percent were under five-years old.

So far in 2010, eight children in the United States have died in hot cars, including a 2-year-old in Manchester, Tenn. Last week in a Bartlett, Tenn. shopping center parking lot, a passerby helped rescue a four-month-old child left in a van. The mother has been charged with child abuse.

If you witness transportation or other child-care violations, please call the Child Care Complaint Hotline at **1-800-462-8261**. The number is posted on every licensed child care vehicle. Visit http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/cc_main.html

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CITIZENS PLAZA, 15TH FLOOR
400 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TN 37248
615.313.4700